

ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION NEWS

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P.O. BOX 1419 NEWPORT RHODE ISLAND 02840

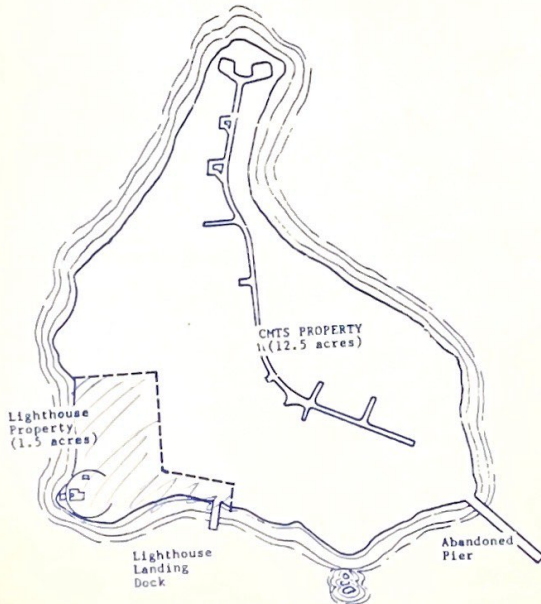
BICENTENNIAL ISSUE - SEPTEMBER 21, 1989

LIGHTHOUSE HISTORY

Built in 1869 on the Southwest bastion of Fort Hamilton, the Rose Island Lighthouse first beamed its fixed red light over lower Narragansett Bay on January 20, 1870. The fog bell was built in an A-frame and established on August 10, 1885.

Its first keeper was Civil War veteran George C. Williams. An 1873 article in the Newport MERCURY marking Washington's Birthday reported that this ever-faithful patriot "unfurled the Stars and Stripes to the breeze from his conspicuous standpoint, which was probably the first time a flag has waved from that island since the Revolution."

Rose Island had been called "Conocko-noquit" (or the place of the long point) by the Narragansett Indians, and Gustavus A. Clarke, beginning his term in 1879 as the second keeper, regularly pleaded to the authorities for sea walls to protect the



vulnerable grassy long point of the 23-acre island from erosion. His pleadings went unheeded, and eventually, the Portland Gale of 1898 reduced that grassy cow pasture to the tidal flats we now see at low tide. The present area of Rose Island is said to be about 17 acres, of which 1.5 acres comprises the lighthouse reservation.

Charles S. Curtis held the post of lighthouse keeper for the longest term of any, 1887-1918, earning two medals for life-saving during his term. He also saw the fog bell replaced with a fog horn. On November 12, 1912, the first assistant keeper Julius Johanssen reported for duty and occupied the newly-remodeled second floor assistant keepers' quarters until 1915, when he was replaced by Charles Fletcher.

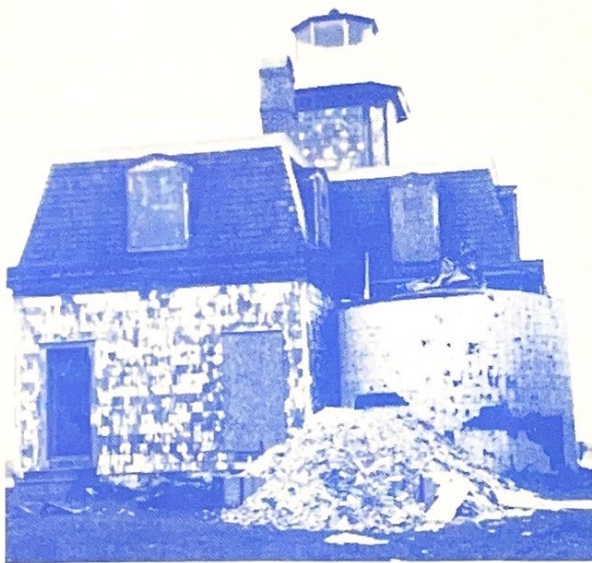


TURN OF THE CENTURY photo shows Charles Curtis and family at the Rose Island Lighthouse before the addition was built for the assistant keeper.

As World War I came over the horizon, military security became a vital concern. Even the keeper's families were required to obtain permits from the Officer in Charge at the Torpedo Station at Goat Island before visiting the lighthouse. Rose Island had become the storage depot for the Navy's torpedoes and explosives, making life at Rose Island about as comfortable as living on a powder keg.

Other Keepers and Assistants came and went, including Delancy E. Roode (1917-1919), Thomas Pickup (1919-1921), A. B. Bessett (1920-1921), E. W. Newton (1921-1926), Jesse Orton (1921-1936), Charles Eldridge (1926-1936), and George S. Bell who was the last Keeper until the Coast Guard took over the duties of the Lighthouse Service in 1941. At that time light-keeping became less of a family affair.

The lighthouse was owned by the Coast Guard into the 1970s but was made obsolete by the building of the Newport Bridge. It was discontinued and turned over to the University of Rhode Island (URI) for marine research in 1976. The Ocean and Engineering Program used the property for a time, but vandalism prevented URI from establishing a permanent Bay monitoring station there. The property was eventually turned over to the General Services Administration for disposal and was offered at no cost to the City of Newport in the Spring of 1984.



ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED

Realizing that the City of Newport would have difficulty adding the cost of restoring the terribly vandalized building to its budget, groups of concerned citizens immediately banded together to form the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation (RILF). An agreement was quickly reached with the City and RILF was authorized to restore, renovate and maintain the lighthouse and its surrounding grounds as an open, public historic site.

While RILF volunteers began cleaning out and boarding up the building in the Spring of 1984, it wasn't until after the property was approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places that the City of Newport could take possession of it. Nevertheless, RILF was determined to save the lighthouse and held its first clambake fundraiser at the Museum of Yachting at Fort Adams.

Finally, a year and a half later, on October 2, 1985, the lighthouse was deeded over to the City of Newport, stipulating that the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation would have five years to complete its proposed renovation and restoration plans.

Once it was given its non-profit, 501(c)3 tax-exempt status, RILF began fundraising in earnest and received its first grants from the American Express Foundation and the Rhode Island Foundation. A clever \$10,000 Vacation Raffle was devised to match the Rhode Island Foundation grant, and news of it was picked up by the wire services. It wasn't long before Rose Island's past Keepers and their families from all over the country were calling to find out how to help with the project.



The Foundation is lucky to have advice from folks like Charles S. Curtis' grandchildren, particularly Wanton Chase, who still lives in Newport; Paul Steadman of Long Island, whose grandfather was Jesse Orton; and George Bell's daughter, Charlotte Olsen of Barrington.

The Foundation also has a good friend in the Alletta Morris McBean Charitable Trust, which has supported the renovation project with two grants totalling \$67,000.

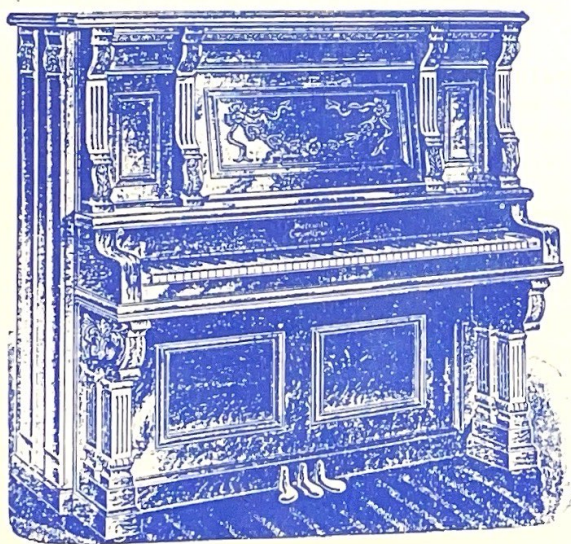
RESTORATION PLANS

The exterior of the lighthouse is being restored to the 1912-1915 period, complete with hexagonally-shaped, colored shingles and period window and door detailing.

The second floor, which was once the Assistant Keeper's quarters, will become RILF's new Keeper's quarters. The first floor will be restored to look much as it might have when Charles Curtis lived there with his family around 1912--right down to the same oak kitchen sideboard that Christina Curtis used. In fact, as soon as the museum is ready for it, this very piece will be donated back to the lighthouse by the Soares family of Middletown.



Other home furnishings that are still being sought for the museum are: Turn-of-the-century (or earlier) pieces, including kerosene table and wall lamps, various pieces of oak furniture for the kitchen, dining room and bedrooms, a full brass bed and three or four twin metal beds, plus linens, quilts and rugs. At one time or another, the "music room" was equipped with a pump organ and an upright player piano. A donation or reasonable price for any of these items would be a great help.



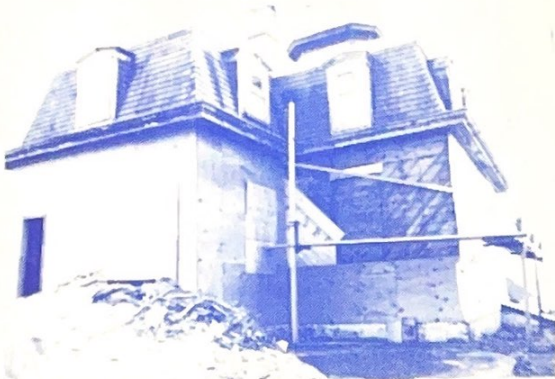
SECOND FLOOR WINDOWS sport new period decoration. They get primed and fitted with new copper tops before they are installed and exposed to the elements.



BUILDING IT RIGHT. First floor window detail from 1912 period is fastened with bronze nails, as are the clapboards throughout the building.



STATE HISTORICAL ARCHITECT Martha Goodwin carefully examines building details on old photograph and discusses possible design changes with Curt Bunting. Originally, the 1940's period was approved for the restoration, but photographs supplied by Paul Steadman have provided enough information for the state to approve our going back even further to the 1912 period, with some slight modifications to make the building stronger and more weather-resistant.



AS THE LIGHTHOUSE TURNS...(above) new plywood sheathing provides smooth surface and strength as it covers the original sheathing planks and is then covered with Tyvek building paper. Windows, cornerboards and clapboards were put on next (below) and the mansard roof stripped of its wood shingles in preparation for the gutter replacement and the installation of a new real slate roof.



OLD WAY / NEW WAY

With no water, electricity or sewer system on the island, the lighthouse will once again become self-sufficient, using a combination of traditional and modern technologies. Gathered water from the roof will be collected in a basement cistern (as in the old days) for wash water and for fire prevention. Drinking water will be carried out to the island. Electricity will be generated by photovoltaic cells (solar panels--new way) which will be hidden from view in a World War II anti-aircraft gun tub. The system will be backed up by diesel generators (old way). And where a 6" pipe once dumped sewage directly into Narragansett Bay, a new pipe will go, instead, to a modern septic field.

As beautiful a site as this is, one would never imagine that dealing with an historic property which is within 200 feet of the coast could be such an administrative nightmare. The paperwork and red tape to get the necessary approvals from a long list of federal and state regulatory agencies, at times have been, to say the least, overwhelming. Now, with RILF's application for the septic field before the State, the light at the end of the tunnel seems brighter, and it looks as though permanent Keepers can be hired for next summer. About thirty five couples have applied for the job so far.

FUNDRAISING GOAL

With the exterior nearly done, RILF intends to focus on the interior renovations in the next nine months. A 1989-90 fundraising goal of \$80,000 has been established to insulate the interior of the building and to complete the second floor Keepers' apartment, enabling permanent Keepers to live there year-round.

It is hoped that this goal will be reached from memberships, contributions (especially from programs like "Lighthouse For Sale"), grants and the proceeds from various events, including the Saturday night Dinner Cruise which is part of the U.S. Lighthouse Society's Bicentennial.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Another way of reaching fundraising goals is to make the best use of volunteers to keep the costs down in the first place. Grateful to volunteers who did a lot of the "grunt" work, RILF has saved at least \$35,000 to date from volunteers having removed all the old dilapidated plaster and lathe from inside the lighthouse.

Current jobs on the volunteer list range from heavy-duty shoveling to less strenuous painting projects. The interior walls are now ready to be insulated, replastered and painted. The exterior still needs a final coat of paint and the slate shingles need to be installed. Also, the gun tub needs to have about two feet of soil and debris dug out of it.

MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

The memberships range from affordable \$5, \$10 and \$20 fees, to \$250 and up for the "Keeper" categories which offer a night at the lighthouse as the "initiation." Obviously, the scheduling of those "initiation" nights will depend on how the renovations progress this Fall and next Spring.

DOROTHY AND PAUL STEDMAN of Long Island heard about our restoration plans when a friend sent them a newspaper clipping about our raffle. Turns out, Paul lived at the Rose Island lighthouse with his grandfather, Jesse Orton during summers from 1919 until 1941.



Sources of information: "Rose Island Centennial" by Richard L. Champlin, NEWPORT HISTORY, Summer 1970, and research at the Washington, D.C. Archives compiled by Charlotte Johnson. Photos: Charlotte Johnson, Editor.

TEAR OFF HERE

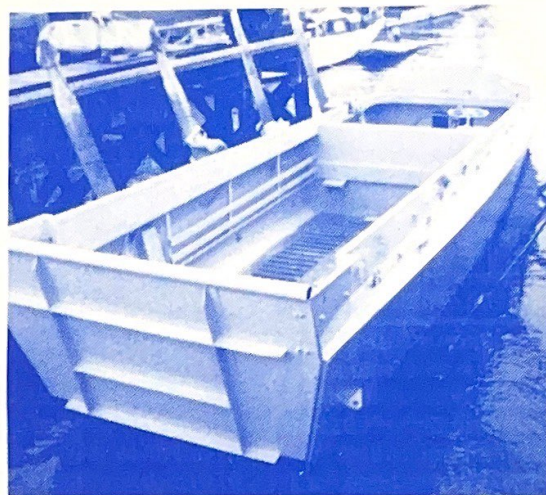
Membership dues and contributions paid to the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation are deductible within legal limits for U.S. Income Tax purposes. Please mail your check to: The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation
1110 Newport Pl. 01840 Thank You!

Thank You!

MEET "ELSIE OF ROSE ISLAND

The problem was how to get thirty tons of rock and gravel out to Rose Island for a septic field. The practical solution was to buy this surplus landing craft for vehicles and personnel (LCVP). Looking somewhat like a 36-foot long shoe box, she can be driven right up onto the beach. When her front gate is lowered, a small truck, trailer or backhoe can be driven off.

We're calling her "Elsie" (after her initials for Landing Craft), but given her shape and the job she's intended to do, we don't object to the cow association, either, as she'll be doing many a "milk run" with heavy equipment and supplies.



Launched on October 28, 1988, at Newport Offshore and finished at Oldport Marine, "Elsie" is berthed during the winter at Goat Island and during the summer at the Museum of Yachting. The current plan is to sell her after we have finished with our major hauling. Anyone interested in purchasing her can contact Curt Bunting at 846-4198.

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LIGHTHOUSE
FOUNDATION

P.O. BOX 1419
NEWPORT
RHODE ISLAND
02840

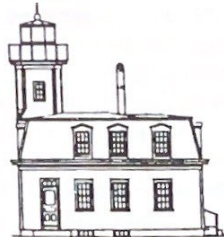


HAPPY 200th BIRTHDAY LIGHTHOUSE SERVICE!

BULK RATE
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ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE FOUNDATION NEWS

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Winter, 1989-90 No. 9

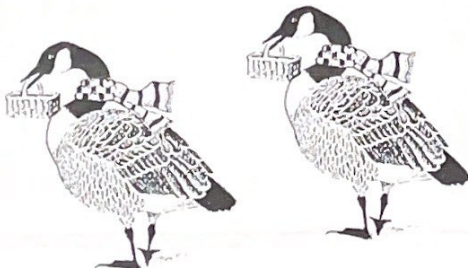
NEW YEAR'S DAY PICNIC

What would New Year's Day be without the Rose Island Picnic? A long-standing tradition, it's success depends first on Mother Nature's cooperation, so we hope that Monday, January 1 is a calm, bright sunny day with the wind (if any) out of the North or Northwest. (There's no rain date this year, because Tuesday is a work day.)

Next we need a bunch of adventurous folks dressed in warm clothes and equipped with picnic baskets full of goodies to eat and to share with others. We'll have a blazing fire to keep you warm and another fire set up with a grate to cook on, so bring mulled cider, hot cocoa, hot dogs, hamburgers, and pots of beans, soup or stew.

There are no fees and no reservations required, just bundle up warmly for the boat ride which will leave from the Goat Island Marina dock by 11:00 am to return around 3:00 pm, depending on the weather. To make special arrangements call Ron Ackman at Oldport Marine 847-9109.

For obvious reasons, we really play this one by ear! As a result, depending on who comes and what food is brought to share, each year we end up having a unique and totally delightful way to celebrate the New Year. Please plan to join us!



"DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!" is the motto we share with Commodore Perry. And no wonder, with a goal of \$40,000 to be raised over this winter, after two years our final septic field plans still before the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) for approval, plus the below-freezing weather keeping workers from finishing the slate roof--and while we're at it, it also looks like we could use a new flagpole!





HURRICANE HUGO v. LIGHTHOUSE BICENTENNIAL

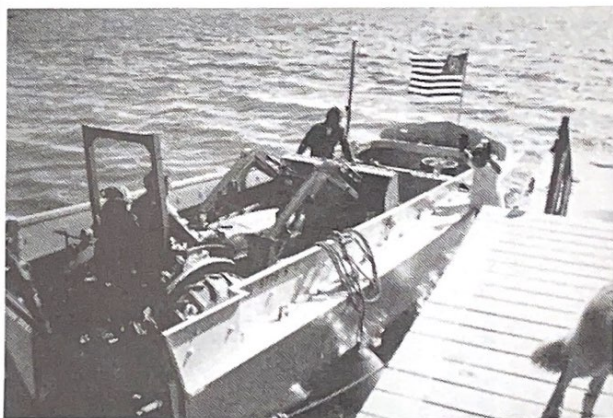
An entertaining and educational time was had by all those who did manage to attend the Lighthouse Bicentennial celebrations, the brain child of Head Keep Wayne Wheeler of the U.S. Lighthouse Society of San Francisco, which sponsored the weekend from September 21-24. By remote control from Society headquarters, Tanja Rabbitt organized an astounding number of hard-working volunteers who came from all over the country to help with the exhibits at the Armory and the Yachting Center and with the many special events. Kudos also go to our own Rose Island volunteers who were in tip top form managing our information booth, lecturing and giving tours at the lighthouse.

Despite all the effort, unfortunately, it was Hurricane Hugo that got the major headlines that weekend and visitors stayed away by the thousands (it was reported that 2,000 room reservations were cancelled over the weekend), for early reports indicated Newport would be in Hugo's path.

While we were, indeed, fortunate that Hugo didn't hit Newport head-on, still, very high winds kicked things up enough out on the Bay that we had to cancel all of our fundraising events scheduled for--you guessed it--Saturday. These included a picnic launch and tour of the lighthouse, the Ida Rather be Rowing Regatta and our dinner cruise aboard "Spirit of Newport." So rather than raise money, we actually went a bit in the hole. We're hoping to be able to make it up soon. (In fact, the "Hugo Alms Bucket" at the lighthouse has already yielded a few contributions and we're hopeful for more. It's a wonderful surprise to see the number of visitors even at this time of year!)

Aside from our problems with Saturday's big blow, most of the other events came off as scheduled. One of the highlights was TRIST's fabulous presentation of an evening with Ida Lewis at the Quaker Meeting House. (So good, some were said to have seen it twice!) The performance was so intimate, so personal, it really set the tone for the whole weekend.

All-in-all, the hundreds of determined lighthouse buffs who did show up and stuck it through the weekend were not at all disappointed. They also got to experience the wonderfully infectious camaraderie that always permeates Newport when she gets into her batten-down-the-hatches-for-a-hurricane mode. The Bicentennial was truly a memorable weekend of helping, sharing and serious "talking lighthouse."



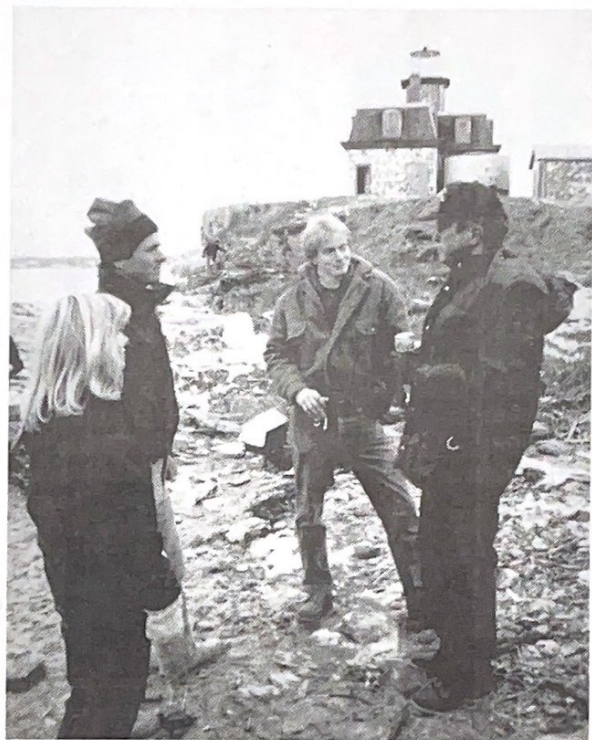
TANKS A LOT GUYS! Bob Zeigler (center), Joe Davis (right) and Chris Barlow (on backhoe) removed a couple of tons of junk and metal, including rusted tanks, boiler pieces and cable which they loaded onto ELSIE. As a result, the lighthouse grounds and basement were both spotless and safe for the Bicentennial tours in September.

\$40,000 NEEDED TO MATCH
1989-90 FEDERAL GRANT

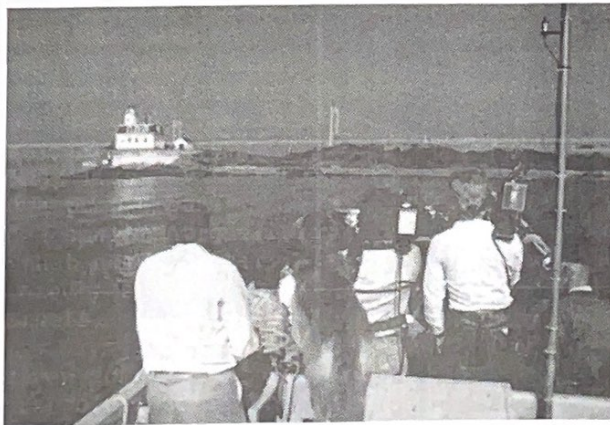
Our project has been approved for a second-year matching grant from the federal Lighthouse Bicentennial fund in the amount of \$20,800. Actually, we have to raise twice that amount and spend it first, then we get reimbursed the \$20,800 after showing that we actually did spend it on what we said we would spend it on in the first place. (A pain to deal with, administratively speaking, but you wouldn't want the government to be less careful with our tax dollars, would you?)

In the first year of the Bicentennial funding, our \$20,500 grant was more than matched by a grant from the Alletta Morris McBean Trust. Then two fearless volunteers, Curt Bunting and Chris Zepp, got us through the paperwork and took photos so we could collect the federal grant money.

This winter we are hoping to raise the \$40,000 matching funds by writing grant applications to other foundations and various businesses, through our regular membership and "Lighthouse for Sale" programs, and through contributions from people who care. Caring, after all, turns out to be the best bottom line we've got, so if you want to help some other way--in any way at all--please drop us a line, or call Charlotte Johnson at 847-4454 or Curt Bunting at 846-4198.



WE WON'T HAVE CHRIS ZEPP TO RELY ON ANY MORE. This archival photo of New Year's Day, 1986, shows (L-R) Lynn Hornowsky, Paul Lestock, Chris Zepp and Curt Bunting discussing restoration plans, no doubt. It's the only picture in the files that doesn't show Chris working--pushing a mower, cleaning up, shoveling out... whatever! From the beginning, Chris Zepp has been a dedicated volunteer and board member. Philadelphia's gain is our loss. We'll miss him!



ENVIRONMENTAL BOND ISSUE SPOTLIGHTS ROSE ISLAND. Early in November, TV crews from Channel 10 and Channel 6 did some nice newscasts on the possible acquisition of the rest of Rose Island with funds from the #3 State Environmental Bond issue that passed on November 7. There is still no news on the negotiations between owners (CMTS) and the state. However, we understand that on Wednesday, January 24, the Newport City Council plans to hold a public meeting and first reading of CMTS' proposed zoning change for a new "Rose Island Zone" that would allow them to build 125 condos, a 200 slip marina, plus a hotel with additional commercial areas.



"ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE" original oil painting by Richard Grosvenor is on display at the Arnold Art Store and Gallery on Thames Street. Of course, some of his other excellent paintings are also there as part of his show, but none as important as this one, for Dick has generously donated 25 signed prints for us to sell at \$20.00 each (\$23.00 including sales tax and mailing). Orders placed through our newsletter benefit the Rose Island Lighthouse. (Each signed print measures 14 1/2" x 18").



FOUR DARK GRAY, ONE LIGHT GRAY, TWO REDS...the pattern of the old slate roof is becoming a reality. It is also the last major step in finishing the exterior repairs of the lighthouse. Here, dedicated restoration expert John Canham of Newport balances over the gutter outside a second floor window while freezing his tootsies and nailing up slates. Delayed by the even colder weather that followed, John plans to have his crew back at the lighthouse to finish up after the first of the year.

ARTIST'S DAY

When we asked for volunteer "painters" in our last newsletter, we were looking for the kind who could handle a 4-inch brush and apply large amounts of white paint to the outside of the lighthouse.

Much to our surprise (and great joy), along with the 4-inch brush handlers, we got offers from folks whose intention it was to help with our fundraising by using much smaller brushes to paint the lighthouse on canvas. What a great idea!

So, on a nice day in the spring, we are hoping to have an "Artist's Day" or two, when we'll provide transportation to the lighthouse for as many artists as want to join in. Later, during the summer, we'll have a show. Because of the many requests for postcards, posters, gift items, etc., we are looking for paintings, photographs, drawings, etchings, etc. that will reproduce well. Maybe we'll even find someone who will redesign our logo, who knows?

If you have other gift ideas, if you need more information or want us to let you know when our "Artist's Days" are scheduled, either drop us a line or call Charlotte at 847-4454.



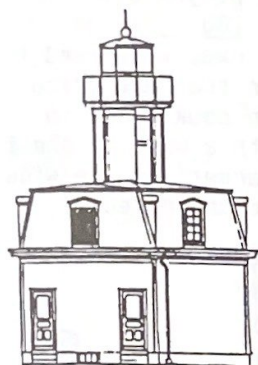
OUR FLASHY LADY shows off her new copper lined gutters and flashing at the base of the mansard roof, making her ready for the slate shingles.

LIGHTHOUSE FOR SALE

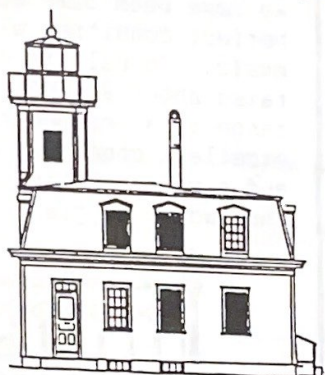
...bit by bit and piece by piece, that is!

For your support of the Rose Island Lighthouse restoration efforts, you will receive an official certificate of ownership, suitable for framing. Window and door owners may also have a small brass plaque engraved and installed.

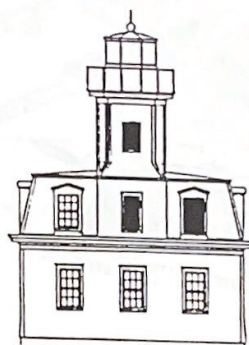
So get a piece of the action...literally! (The only stipulation, of course, is that you must leave your piece in place!)



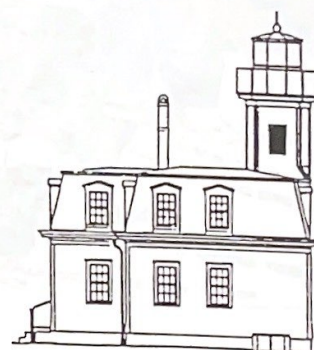
EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

I wish to purchase the following piece of the Rose Island Lighthouse to help restore the lighthouse and keep it open to the public. I hereby agree to leave the piece in place:

| | |
|---|----------|
| _____ CLAPBOARDS at \$50 each | \$ _____ |
| _____ SLATE SHINGLES at \$100 each | \$ _____ |
| _____ WINDOWS at \$500 each (13 available)* | \$ _____ |
| _____ DOORS at \$1000 each (3 available) | \$ _____ |

*Darkened windows on the drawing have already been sold.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

City

State

Zip

TELEPHONE: _____

home

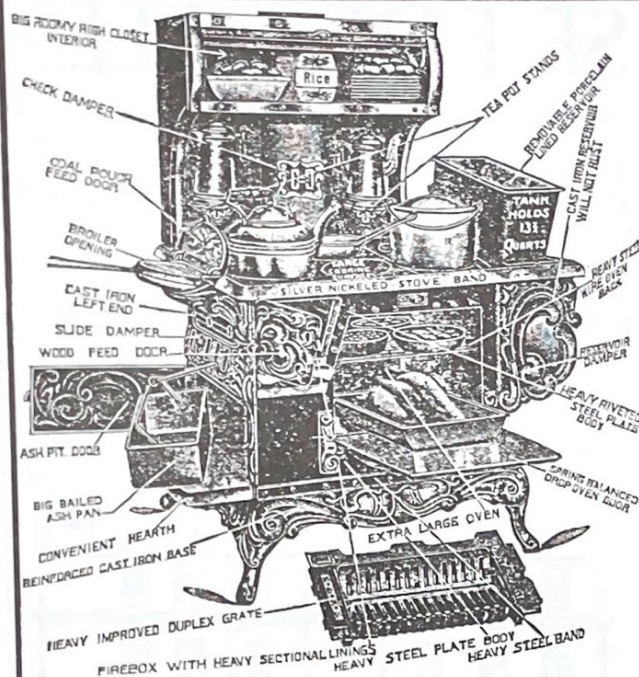
office

Name to be written on the deed as follows (please print):

The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Contributions are deductible within legal limits for U.S. Income Tax purpose.

Please make your check to the "Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation" and mail it along with this form to: P.O. Box 1419, Newport, Rhode Island 02840

THANK YOU!



LIGHTHOUSE FURNISHINGS

Our request for lighthouse furnishings has turned up both donations and offers of some wonderful things!

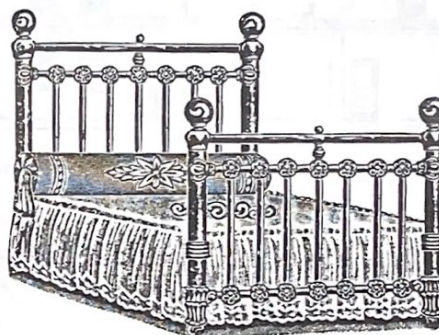
Lighthouse keepers and their families from Rose Island, as well as other lighthouses, have offered furnishings including chairs, quilts and china. Paul Stedman (whose grandfather was Keeper Jesse Orton) has donated photographs, some china and the very same wooden toy boat he played with at the lighthouse when he was a child. Good for us he saved it!

Other furnishings recently donated include a Boston rocker, a Lincoln rocker, an old wooden wringer used for washing clothes, various kerosene hurricane lamps, a wooden chair, and a combination kitchen table & cabinet. Because we don't have a lot of storage space, we plan to pick up other items in the spring, like a Victorian platform rocker and a pump organ. We've also been offered a small antique wood/oil cooking stove that needs repair. Still on the wish list are brass beds, quilts, dressers and carpets.

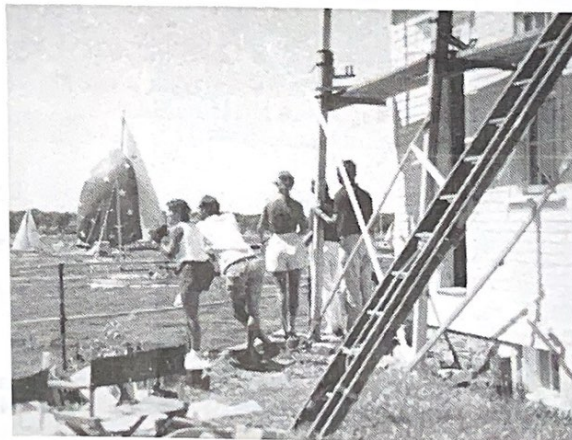
While we have been given some very authentic pieces, at this point, we're not being picky and can make use of just about

any old furnishings in good condition that are offered. For starters, we are trying to get the lighthouse furnished. As we gradually acquire pieces more true to the period, we will probably auction the newer pieces to raise money to buy more antique furniture. So, one way or another, you can be sure that whatever is donated will be put to good use to benefit the lighthouse.

In the "Let's Make a Deal" department, we have been offered a player piano in perfect condition with 100 rolls of music. To call it our own, we'd need to raise about \$3,000. In the same price range is a reproduction cook stove in excellent condition with a warming shelf and a water heating "jacket" on the side that would be great for the museum.



THE FABULOUS Js RACE IN THE FRONT YARD. What a treat it was to watch the races between ENDEAVOUR and SHAMROCK from the Rose Island Lighthouse! Since the lighthouse offers an unparalleled vantage point, we hope to see more races started and/or finished at the lighthouse.

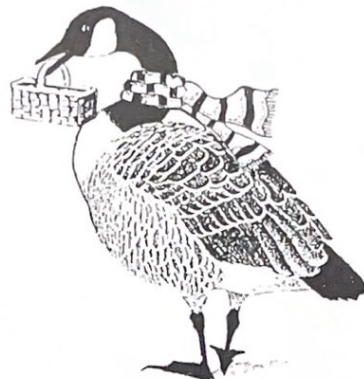


Don't forget, you're invited to join us for our annual

NEW YEAR'S DAY PICNIC AND BONFIRE ON ROSE ISLAND

MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 1990
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

- Meet by 11:00 AM at the Goat Island Marina dock for a launch ride to Rose Island
- No reservations required
- No previous experience required
- Just dress warmly and bring something to share



----- detach here -----

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street

City

State

Zip

Phones: _____

days

evenings

- Enclosed please find my/our membership dues for the 1989-90 fiscal year ending June 30, 1990 in the following category: _____ new _____ renewal

_____ \$ 5 Student/Senior
_____ \$10 Individual
_____ \$25 Family/Business
_____ \$50 Inspector

_____ \$ 100 Superintendent
_____ \$ 250 Assistant Keeper*
_____ \$ 500 Associate Keeper*
_____ \$1000 Head Keeper*

*As soon as the renovations are complete, initiation for the "Keeper" categories will be a night for two at the lighthouse.

- Enclosed please find my/our contribution in the amount of \$ _____
- Please send _____ "Rose Island Lighthouse" prints at \$23.00 each \$ _____
(includes \$20.00 print, plus \$3.00 to cover sales tax and mailing)
- I/we would like to volunteer to help, or wish to donate items for the museum as follows:

Membership dues and contributions paid to the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation are deductible within legal limits for U.S. Income Tax purposes. Please mail your check to:

The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation
P.O. Box 1419, Newport, RI 02840

Thank You!

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*Hoping your Holiday Season
will be filled with
good cheer, and
that it will continue
throughout the New Year*

